



The Weekly Page

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 12

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Pages Learn About Legislature



Mock committees debate bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to research and write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday. Students spent a day either researching social problems or playing the "Ax and Tax" budget game to get information for constructing their bills. They used class templates to transfer the information and their proposed solutions to a very real-looking House or Senate bill. Pages read their bills and "committee members," governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A "DO PASS" or "DO NOT PASS" recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.

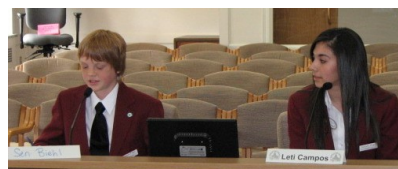
Reps strike out against teen pregnancy



Olympia – House Bill 3994 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Ben Taff and Justin Parker. "This bill addresses the issue of teen pregnancy and will reduce the instances of these cases throughout Washington State," said Rep. Taff. The bill focuses on providing several different types of abstinence awareness programs for public high schools to include as a mandatory part of all health

classes. Aimed at both boys and girls, the programs are designed to present to students the dangers and negative consequences of teenage pregnancy and how this will effect their futures. All of the information will be 100 percent factual and based on recent statistics.

Goal is healthier children



Olympia – Senate Bill 7379 was introduced yesterday by Senators Leti Campos and Austin Biehl. "This bill addresses the issue of children's health

and will prohibit smokers from lighting up around minors," said Sen. Biehl. To reduce a child's exposure to second-hand smoke, the Legislature will prohibit smoking in buildings or cars that contain minors. Infants living in households with a parent who smokes have levels of nicotine in their urine that are comparable to a light smoker, according to recent reports. Non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke at home increase their heart disease risk by 25-30 percent and their lung cancer risk by 20-30 percent. "This will benefit the health of thousands of our state's minors," said Sen. Campos. "Prohibiting smoking around minors will allow children, who have no choice to leave the house, a chance to have a healthier respiratory system."

Reps advocate freeing elderly inmates

Olympia – House Bill 1167 was introduced yesterday by Representatives MJ Jenkins and Lucas Agnew. “This bill addresses the issue of healthcare costs for elderly prison inmates and will save the state millions of dollars,” said Rep. Agnew. If this bill becomes law, prisoners over the age of 55 with serious disabilities will be moved from maximum security institutions to a monitored house-arrest program. Recent studies show that aging inmates cost two to three more times more than a younger prisoner on average, and about 13 percent of prisons are age 55 and older. “In addition, we have a plan to release severely disabled inmates who are non-violent or have not committed a sex crime to their family so they can receive their needed care through private insurance,” said Rep. Jenkins.



Sleepy teens rejoice, Legislature considers later high school start times



Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Ciara Mielke introduced House Bill 2868, which addresses the issue of teen sleep deprivation and academic success. “The bill is a good one because it will reduce tardiness, absenteeism, the risk of metabolic and nutritional deficits associated with insufficient sleep, and will increase the proficiency of struggling

high school students in our state,” said Rep. Mielke. Landmark studies by the Child Psychiatry Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) found that the irregularity of a teen's biorhythms are caused by biological processes. The study also stated the importance of a good night's sleep. “Daytime stimulation, education and new knowledge, is ‘hard-wired’ into the brain during that night’s REM sleep, the last 30 minutes or so of the recommended 8.5-9.5 hours per night for teens. However, most teens are lucky to get only 7.5 hours per night, skipping the REM cycle almost completely, and their educations and behavior are suffering because of it.” An examination by the National Sleep Foundation of the Minneapolis School District's switch to later start times has indicated many benefits in aligning school start times with the biological patterns of teens. This bill will require all public high schools in the state to set a later start time.

Budget package includes cuts/taxes

Olympia—Yesterday the Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representative Jordan Wessell and Senators Sharon Gingrich, Ian P. McKnight, and James Moller regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst we’ve seen in decades,” said Sen. McKnight. The proponents of the package were, for the most part, all in favor of doing some cutting as well as some taxing to balance the budget. Sen. McKnight did not feel that cuts could be made to the human services programs that make up nearly 2/3 of the operating budget and was the only member advocating taxation as a way to make up for lost revenues. “We need a small personal income tax of .25 percent. This would be a small burden to the residents of the state. Unlike other taxes and cuts, it does not target specific economic groups. Instead, it would equally affect all citizens,” he said. This tax would bring in \$600 million. In addition to Sen. McKnight, Sen. Moller, Sen. Gingrich, and Rep. Wessell were in favor of taxing soft drinks and cigarettes. “The average cost of a soft drink is \$1 and a 5 cent tax will not keep people from buying sodas. It is a beverage that people habitually drink and it will bring in \$272 million,” said Sen. Moller. Supporting the cigarette tax, Rep. Wessell said, “Individuals already addicted to cigarettes will keep smoking regardless of the 50 cent tax increase.” There were a few cuts that the members were willing to make. Among them were cuts in the class size reduction money and cutting spending on goods and services. “For most classes, the small amount of money will not reduce the number



of students in classes significantly,” said Sen. Gingrich. As for office supplies and services such as catering and janitorial duties, a 25 percent cut

would save \$200 million. “This gives people an incentive to be more resourceful with their goods. Since many of the everyday citizens have cut back on these types of things, there is no reason why the government cannot, too,” said Sen. Moller. “I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now,” said Rep. Wessell.



Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

Helping the environment may help pocketbook

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Carmen Campbell introduced Senate Bill 5050, which addresses the issue of global climate change. “The bill is a good one because it will reduce the impact of human activity on the greenhouse effect,” said Sen. Campbell. If this bill becomes a law, power companies will have to convert to 30 percent alternative power by 2013. In order to build the required infrastructure, power companies will be allowed to add a 3 percent surcharge to all customers’ monthly bills. Over time, companies and consumers will recover the invested money, possibly more. “Not only can this bill help the environment, it can help your pocketbook,” said Sen. Campbell.



Policy cut-off week brings bill process closer to an end

This week bills were voted out of policy committees in opposing chambers as they continued through the lawmaking process. Pages got a first-hand look at how parliamentary procedure is used by legislators on the floor as they considered remaining bills. Over 2,000 bills were introduced in the two chambers, but

only about 15-20 percent will actually become laws. Pages were busy on the floors of both the House and the Senate, delivering documents, listening to their legislators express their views and watching the voting process. During the remaining weeks of session, changes to original bills made by opposite houses will go back to the house of origin for approval. Bills which are passed in their final form will be sent to the Governor for her signature by the session’s end on April 26.

New bill reforms justice system

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Adam Roberts and Evan Lenius introduced House Bill 1000, which addresses the issue of the death penalty. “The bill is a good one because it will prevent the innocent from being executed,” said Rep. Roberts. This bill will require DNA testing in all capital murder cases in order to sentence a person to death. In Dallas County, James Waller, 50, was exonerated by a judge and received a apology from the district attorney's office after a new type of DNA testing of evidence showed he was not the rapist who attacked a 12-year-old boy in Waller's apartment building in 1983. The boy had been the chief witness against him. If this bill becomes law, when there is no DNA evidence, the maximum sentence for a convicted murderer would be life in prison without parole.



Guest speakers visit Page School

Rep. Jeff Morris (D-40th), lobbyist Lori Bielinski of the Washington Chiropractic Association, former house page and current Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) member Phil Gardner, and contract lobbyist Steve Lindstrom joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs and the issues they are currently working on. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker’s questions.



Legislature proposes plastic bag elimination

Olympia – House Bill 1197 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Theodosia Fehsenfeld, Erica Scevers, and Marta Nelson.

"This bill addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution and will eliminate their usage in Washington State," said Rep. Fehsenfeld. The bags are harmful to the environment, choking landfills, killing marine life and consuming unneeded energy, according to Rep. Nelson. "Each year Americans consume between 30 and 100 billion plastic bags—enough to encircle the planet at least 31 times," she said. The Washington State legislature proposes to eliminate all use of plastic bags in grocery and convenience stores. They will be replaced with eco-friendly bags made of cotton, recycled canvas, bottles and other biodegradable materials.



Bill 5099 seeks to save salmon



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Samuel Valaer introduced Senate Bill 5099, which addresses the issue of the dwindling salmon population. "The bill is a good one because it will help repopulate the species and return it to historic levels," said Sen. Valaer. The bill advocates the removal of the four dams on the Snake

River that are keeping salmon from some of the best-protected habitat in the U.S and also bringing the waters to temperatures unsuitable for salmon smolt. "Currently three species are at risk—the Upper Columbia River Steelhead, the Upper Columbia River Spring Chinook and the Snake River Sockeye salmon. We can't let this happen; salmon are literally the energy that fuels our natural environment," said Sen. Valaer.

New age requirement aims for safer hunting seasons

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Zack Elliott and Zachary Maulin introduced House Bill

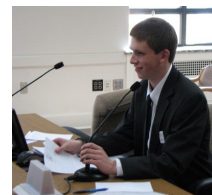


1001, which addresses the issue of hunting age requirements. "The bill is a good one because it will substantially decrease accidents in the state's fields and forests," said Rep. Elliott. In 2008, a 14-year

-old hunter shot and killed a hiker only 120 yards away. Washington currently has no hunting age requirement. In order to lower the amount of hunting accidents, the Legislature will require that hunters under the age of 18 be accompanied by a licensed adult at least 21 years old. The state also will require the separation of hunting and hiking areas. Finally, the state will establish the age at which one can obtain a hunting license at 12 years old. "It is outrageous that Washington has failed to follow other states and require a hunting age requirement," said Rep. Maulin. "If we have an age requirement in joining the military, we should have one for hunting. It's common sense," he said.

House looks into fixing voter fraud

Olympia – House Bill 1100 was introduced yesterday by Representative Nathan Brand. "This bill addresses the issue of voter fraud and will remove alternative identification sources for validating mail-in registrations," said Rep. Brand. This legislation will clear



up some of the problems from the previous elections. After the 2006 election, Secretary of State Sam Reed said the election "was the worst case of voter fraud in our state history. It was an outrage." He later went on to say that if photo ID had been required for voting in our state, the problems could have been avoided. Currently, if a voter who registered by mail indicates he does not have a state driver's license, a state identification card or a social security card, he must provide one of eight alternative documents, including a recent paycheck or utility bill. "This just will not do," said Rep. Brand. The only alternative ID that will now be accepted is a U.S. passport or a valid enrollment card from a federally recognized Indian tribe in the state.

Tired teens need more sleep



Olympia – Senate Bill 6438 was introduced yesterday by Senators Caleb Hou and Josh Drinkard. "This bill addresses the issue of sleepy teens and academic success and will improve student grades and health," said Sen. Drinkard. "Parents and schools do not

realize that our older kids are biologically geared for staying up later and waking up later. We constantly impair their learning ability by creating schedules for them that are in stark contrast to what they need," said Sen. Hou. "When other state school districts make start time changes, they show a dramatic increase in grade levels," he said. This bill requires all public high schools to begin their morning classes no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

Hearing held to debate same-sex marriage



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Alexander Fehsenfeld and Nicholas Landis introduced Senate Bill 6034, which addresses the issue of same-sex marriage. “The bill is a good one because it will help end discrimination against gays, bisexuals, lesbians, and transgenders (GBLTs),” said Sen. Fehsenfeld. The bill would allow them to marry in the state of Washington. “These people are just another group of people and should not be discriminated against based solely on their sexual orientation. We realize the controversy surrounding this issue, but we strongly believe in equal rights for all people,” said Sen. Landis. If this bill becomes law, Washington will be the third state to sanction same-sex marriage. Currently Massachusetts and Connecticut recognize the unions.

Tax credit helps the reduction of plastic bags

Olympia – Senate Bill 6002 was introduced yesterday by Senators Hannah Robertson and Caitlin Finley. “This bill addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution and will help clean up our environment,” said Sen. Robertson. This bill will abolish the use of plastic bags in retail and grocery stores. “We expect less pollution, less plastics to dispose of and recycle, and decreased wildlife deaths because of improper disposal,” said Sen. Finley. Stores that volunteer to remove plastic bags and replace them with reusable cotton or paper bags for their customers will earn a \$500 tax credit for their efforts toward helping the environment, if this bill becomes law.



Hunger: say your prayers!

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Kaylie Holcomb and Michelle Magana introduced House Bill 3150, which addresses the issue of hungry Washingtonians. “The bill is a



good one because it will reduce the number of starving households in the state,” said Rep. Holcomb. Every year, thousands of Washington residents go hungry. Parents are not able to provide enough food for their children, and the children are becoming malnourished. This bill will establish government subsidized food-banks called Hungry Homes in every town with a high poverty rate. To pay for the food, the Legislature will place a 25-cent tax on all purchases over \$10.

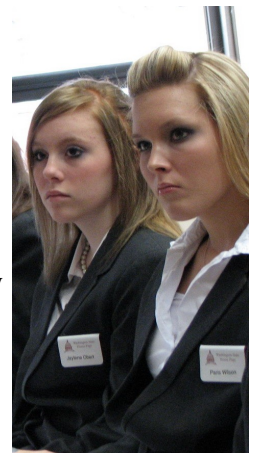
Elderly driving accident rates to drop



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Meghan Fewins and Ava Claridge introduced Senate Bill 5872, which addresses the issue of elderly drivers. “The bill is a good one because it will protect innocent citizens who are harmed or killed by dangerous seniors who shouldn’t be driving,” said Sen. Fewins. This bill will require drivers over the age of 65 to take another driving test, similar to the ones that teenagers take, to make sure that they are still competent and able to operate a motor vehicle.

Fluorescent yellow license plates suggested for drunk drivers

Olympia – House Bill 2468 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Paris Wilson and Jaylene Obert. “This bill addresses the issue of drunk driving fatalities and will require all convicted drunk drivers to display a yellow license plate on their vehicle,” said Rep. Wilson. In 2006, out of 100,000 people, there were 79 fatalities related to driving drunk; 36,986 people were arrested for DUI in the state in that year. The alcohol consumption between 12 to 20-year-olds has been rapidly rising in the last two years. This bill may shame drivers into driving sober, according to Rep. Obert. “It also allows other drivers on the road to be alert and aware of the past convicted driver on the road next to them,” she said. “Drunk driving is unacceptable, but some people will continue driving under the influence again. The yellow license plates might keep others safe, as well,” said Sen. Wilson.



Higher academic hurdles needed for student athletes



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Melissa Aeschliman and Allison Arthur introduced House Bill 1127, which addresses the issue of high school academic requirements for athletes. “The bill is a good one because it helps

raise the standards in education for those who participate in sports, allowing them to be more prepared for their life after high school,” said Rep. Aeschliman. The Legislature will establish a 2.0 grade point average for eligibility to participate on teams in all public high schools. This bill will be enforced by the Superintendents of all school districts. “Many students think they are going to become professional athletes, but the majority will not and need to be prepared to get a good job. Unless they do well in school, that won’t happen. This should help them,” said Rep. Arthur.

More dream time for students



Olympia – Senate Bill 6874 was introduced yesterday by Senator Kelly Walls. “This bill addresses the issue of junior high and high school start times and will improve the average attendance rate and increase the average test scores in all public secondary schools throughout the state,” said Sen.

Walls. This bill will change the start times of the junior highs to 8:45 a.m. and the high schools to 9 a.m. “This will promote academic excellence, as well as decrease the potential for violence, anxiety, and irritability in all students,” said Sen. Walls.

Make ‘em pay!



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Reid Gordon and Aaron Ved introduced House Bill 3999, which addresses the issue of prison reform. “The bill is a good one because it will cut costs for the state and give offend-

ers a second chance to function in society,” said Rep. Ved. If the bill becomes law, the Legislature will eliminate many of the prisons. Convicted criminals will be charged with an amount of debt to fit their crime, which they will have to pay. Felons will be monitored through ankle and/or wrist bracelets until their debt is paid. Prisons will only be used for repeated sexual or

physical assault cases. The death penalty will be given to dangerous felons who senselessly murder innocent people.

Dropout rates through the roof

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Austin Von Herbulis, Asa Wolfe, and Grant Woods introduced Senate Bill 7892, which addresses the issue of high school dropouts. “The bill is a good one because it will ensure that all students will be successful after high school,” said Sen. Von Herbulis. Twenty-two out of the 290 high schools in Washington state fall into the category of “dropout factories,” which is a school where no more than 60 percent of all students graduate. Every year 16,000 students dropout statewide. “That’s the size of a small town,” said Sen. Woods. This bill requires all students to stay in school until they have their high school diploma.



State refuses to see children die



Olympia – Senate Bill 7134 was introduced yesterday by Senator Hayden Brackenbury. “This bill addresses the issue of providing medical care for children whose parents refuse treatment based on religious grounds,”

said Sen. Brackenbury. Parents in Colorado have let over 30 children die in the last 15 years because they refused to let them have medication. Often they are refusing blood transfusions that would save the child’s life. This bill would give guardianship of ill children whose parents refuse medical treatment to the state. At that point, the government would authorize the life-saving treatment.

Competitive edge results in *Jeopardy* win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of *Jeopardy*. Winning teams were comprised of individuals who had learned the most during their week in Page School and were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.

Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at: www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/. This newsletter has been posted there.